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BELIEFS, RITES, AND CUSTOMS OF THE JEWS,  
CONNECTED WITH DEATH, BURIAL, AND  
MOURNING.

(AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE BIBLE AND LATER JEWISH  
LITERATURE.)

I.

It is almost inevitable that any statement published with emphatic and persistent iteration, provided it be invested with the semblance of intrinsic probability, should sooner or later find general acceptance as an established fact. It is thus that a one-voiced postulate so often develops into a universal axiom; that assertion sinks its individuality in tradition, and tradition is merged in history.

It has repeatedly been alleged against the Jewish race, that they have from time immemorial displayed an abnormal fear of death. Even recently, Professor Max Müller stated (Gifford Lectures, 1891) that death was considered by the Jews as the greatest of misfortunes. "To rejoice in death is a purely Christian, not a Jewish idea" (p. 369).

Again, Canon Awdry remarks, in the *Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, 1893: "When the time came that a man must die, death had a gloom and terror even for the best Israelite, which for Christians it has lost" (*Domestic and Social Ordinances of the Jews*, p. 170).

The Jew himself can rest satisfied with the reflection that he has taught his fellow-men how to live, and may forbear from disputing the claim of others to have shown mankind how to die.

But an unprejudiced representation of historical facts is

always welcomed by those who regard truth as the *ultima thule* of the pursuit of all knowledge. Hence the *raison d'être* of this somewhat protracted introduction.

Who could fail to recognise the inimitable beauty of the New Testament conception of death, so splendidly illustrated in their own lives by those who expounded it? But, is it really the case that the ancient Jews—to borrow an immortal expression of Dante's—"had not the hope to die?" Do not their records teem with noble instances of sons and daughters of Israel, who faced the supreme moment with that inflexible courage which is only born of unwavering faith?

As a matter of fact, the Old Testament does not afford a single example of any prominent Israelite (must we except Hezekiah?) having manifested a craven fear of death.

The Patriarchs are "gathered to their fathers," (a phrase in itself suggestive of trustful confidence in a blissful hereafter), without a murmur of disappointment or regret (Gen. xxv. 8, xxxv. 29, xlix. 33).

One of the most sublimely pathetic passages in the Bible is that which describes Moses in the solemn hour when he was told that he must depart from this world without entering the Promised Land, the goal of his hopes and aspirations (Numbers xxvii. 16).

And who that has studied the principles and teachings of the prophets, as set forth in their imperishable writings, could harbour for one moment the idea that the ancient seers of Israel were at all scared by their removal from the sphere of their earthly labours?

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?"

Surely this eloquent outburst of Hosea's might reasonably be taken as an index to the feeling with which the prophets of Israel contemplated the close of their ministrations on earth.

It is true that Job calls death "the king of terrors" (Job xviii. 14); but, after all, it is in this light that death is universally regarded by the human race.

"The weariest and most loathèd worldly life  
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment  
Can lay on nature, is a paradise  
To what we fear of death."

(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, Act III., Scene 1.)

Now and then, too, a melancholy Psalmist or the pessimistic Koheleth gives voice to the despondency which frequently fastens upon the spirit of man at the approach of death.

But, no sooner has the echo of an isolated wail of despair died away, than the minstrel of hope wafts to our ears the dulcet notes of an ascending scale which culminates in God.

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God ?"

Psalm xlii. 2.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me :  
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

Psalm xxiii. 4.

"Thou shalt . . . . afterward receive me to glory.

. . . . .  
My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my  
heart and my portion for ever."

Psalm lxxiii. 24-26.

"My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth

. . . . .  
For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol,  
Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.  
Thou wilt show me the path of life :  
In thy presence is fulness of joy ;  
In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Psalm xvi. 9, 10, 11.

Here, as Mr. Claude Montefiore truly remarks, "is

the temper clearly manifest which could withstand the scaffold and the stake."

And, passing on to post-Biblical times, one has only to scan the thrilling chronicles of the Maccabæan age to satisfy an impartial mind that the Jews of that period were able to respond to the call of death with heroic serenity.

When a Jewish mother saw seven of her sons in turn led to the slaughter, she could summon sufficient fortitude to exclaim, "Rather let me see them all perish one by one than that any of them should transgress the laws of his fathers" (cf. 2 Macc. vii. ; T.B. *Gittin*, 57 b).

The Rabbis, too, were in this respect not unworthy of their sires. "When Aqiba was being led out to execution, it was the time of reading the Shema', and they were combing his flesh with combs of iron, and he was receiving upon him the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven (*i.e.*, reciting the Shema'). To his disciples who remonstrated, 'Thus far thou hast endured enough;' 'All my days,' said he, 'I have been troubled about this verse: "Thou shalt love the Lord . . . with all thy soul," even if he should take away thy spirit. When, said I, will it be in my power to fulfil this? Now that I have the opportunity, shall I not fulfil it?'" (T. B. *Berachoth* 61b, quoted in *Pirke Aboth*, ed. Taylor, p. 68, note 31. See also the noble speech of Eleazar recorded in Josephus, *Wars of Jews*, VII. viii. 6). Even in their last moments the Rabbis were accustomed to pursue their life-absorbing study—the Torah—unappalled by fear of their advancing foe (T. B. *Shabbath*, 83b). And it is suggestive that in *Bereshith Rabba* (ix. 5 and 10) the expression—

And lo, it was very good (Gen. i. 31),

is interpreted as referring to the Angel of Death.

We must also not forget that the earliest Christian martyrs, whose blood formed the seed of the Church, were themselves either Jews by birth or but narrowly removed from Jewish ancestors.

Coming to still later times, a glance at Zunz's spirit-stirring essay "Leiden" (embodied in *Die Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*) will convince us of the joyous fearlessness with which the sons and daughters of Israel in the Middle Ages faced the most terrible death rather than renounce their faith.

It is true that in that labyrinthine library—the Talmud—one comes across an occasional passage (cf., e.g., T. B. *Berachoth*, 5b, 28b; *Kethuboth* 103b, and *Aboth de R. Nathan*, ed. Schechter, Recens. 1, ch. xxv.) which indicates that certain Rabbis partook of ordinary human weakness, and could not meet death without flinching. (See, however, Montefiore, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 482.) But let us consider all that the advent of death implied to a Jew in days of old. It betokened his removal from the congregation of the Lord ere the brilliant destiny promised to his people had been fulfilled; the silencing of his voice which delighted in continually chanting the praises of the Guardian of Israel (cf. Is. xxxviii. 18; Ps. lxxxviii. 11); his divorce from the beloved Torah and the manifold blessings conferred by the study of its teachings; the blighting of a passionate hope to witness the ineffable glory of Messiah's reign, as well as the interruption of his life-work ere he had assured himself of the guerdon which is vouchsafed to the righteous in Paradise.

It is not my purpose, however, to discuss exhaustively the Jewish conception of death at any epoch in the history of Israel. I have only endeavoured to show that it is unsafe to deduce from a few scattered expressions in the Bible the death-conception of a whole nation of such venerable antiquity through all the varying stages of its evolution. It were just as absurd to attempt to prove from Matthew xxvii. 16 and Luke xxii. 44, without reference to other passages, or to the evidence of history, that Christians were not taught to meet death with the equanimity of a Stoic philosopher.

I now propose to give a sketch of beliefs, rites, and

customs of the Jews, connected with death, burial, and mourning, as illustrated by the Bible and later Jewish literature.

I have found it impossible to treat the subject adequately within the compass of an essay, but I intend at some future date to extend the range of my researches, and to deal with many points of interest which I have been compelled either to pass over altogether, or to touch upon but lightly in the pages that follow.

## II.

As the Angel of Death may be said to represent the spring and pivot of most of the legendary traditions which we shall have to pass under review, it seems fitting to acquaint ourselves first of all with his complex personality, his mysterious methods, and his prodigious powers.

It was only natural that the form of death which presented itself to the vivid imagination of the Semitic races should have been what Mr. Herbert Spencer calls "personalised death."

The expression "Angel of Death" does not, it is true, occur in the Bible, although the plural מַלְאָכֵי מוֹת is to be found in Prov. xvi. 14, where it is no doubt employed in the general sense of vehicles of destruction. It is interesting to note that the Septuagint *in loco* has the singular, showing the influence of a popular belief of later times on the translator.

But although the Angel of Death is not mentioned expressly by name in the Old Testament, death is frequently personified throughout its pages. Cf. 1 Sam. xx. 31; xxvi. 16; 2 Sam. xii. 5; xix. 29; Isai. xxviii. 15, 18; Hab. ii. 5; Ps. xlix. 15; lv. 5; Prov. xiii. 14; xiv. 27; xvi. 14; Job xviii. 13; xxviii. 22 (Targ. מַלְאָךְ מוֹת).

Death is also referred to under various figures, as shown

by the Targum and the Rabbinic commentaries. Thus the Targ. on Ps. xci. 5 paraphrases מַחֲצֵץ מוֹרָא—מן גִּירָרָא דְּמַלְאךְ מוֹרָא. The *Midrash Rabba* on the Song of Songs explains the word הַחֹשֶׁךְ, in Deut. v. 20, as symbolical of death. Likewise *Shemoth Rab.* (ii. 4) interprets חֹשֶׁךְ in the verse, “and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen. i. 3), as being equivalent to death, which darkens the face of man. Again the Targum on Habakkuk renders יְלֶךְ דְּבָר לִפְנֵי (iii. 5), “From before him was sent the Angel of Death” (*Peshitta*: “motha”); while the verse, “Then I returned and saw vanity under the sun” (Eccl. iv. 7), is explained in *Koheleth Rabba* as referring to the spear of the Angel of Death. (Some translate the word expressing spear in the Midrash, viz., אֵידָרָא, “flag” = Gk. *δρεψ*. Cf. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act V., Sc. 3: “And death’s pale flag is not advanced there.”) In Psalm xci. 3, Death is introduced under the simile of יְקוֹשֵׁ, “fowler,” one who lays snares (cf. 2 Sam. xxii. 6; Ps. xviii. 6, “The snares of death came upon me”). He may also be alluded to in Prov. xvii. 11, as מַלְאָךְ אֲכֹזֵרִי, and v. 9, לְאֲכֹזֵרִי, the *Midrash Mishlé* on the latter verse explaining: “Thou wilt be handed over to a cruel angel.” The Targum on Eccles. v. 5, likewise paraphrases לִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ by קְדָם מַלְאכָא אֲכֹזֵרָא. It is possible, however, that מַלְאָךְ אֲכֹזֵרִי is rather identical with the angel אֲכֹזְרִיאֵל or אֲכֹזְרִיאֵל, “Herald of God,” whose function it is to call out (*κηρύσσειν*) in Heaven (*vide* Levy’s *Neuhebr. und Chald. Wörterbuch*, I. 78b).

In 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, and the parallel passage 1 Chron. xxi. 15, we meet the phrase לַמַּלְאָךְ הַמַּשְׁחִית, which probably represents the primitive conception of the Angel of Death. (Targum *in loco*, מַלְאכָא דְּמוֹרָא). For it is almost certain that originally “to the mind of the Israelite, death and pestilence took the personal form of the destroying Angel who smote the doomed” (Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. I., p. 267). See 1 Cor. x. 10, where death is described as *ὁλοθρευτής*. Likewise, in the sacred books of the Persians, Agromainyus (later Aharman or Ahriman), who is “full



of death," signifies "the destroyer," in contradistinction from Ahuramazda, *i.e.* Cpentomains, the spirit that generates (Kohut, *Ueber die Jüdische Angelologie und Demonologie*, p. 18). Moreover, "the Sanscrit *mṛityu*, 'death,' comes from the root *mri* or *mar*, to grind down, to destroy, and means originally no more than the agent of destruction" (*Anthropological Religion*, Max Müller, p. 140).

In several places in the Old Testament and in two passages in the Apocrypha, "the destroying Angel" is dignified by the title "Angel of the Lord" (Cf. 2 Kings xix. 35; Isai. xxxvii. 36; Ps. xxxv. 5, 6; 1 Chr. xxi. 12, 30; Hist. of Susanna, 55, 59). "The author of Ecclesiastes (close of Persian period) represents the destroying Angel as the Minister of God" (*Bampton Lectures*, Cheyne, p. 335). In 2 Chr. xxxii. 21, he is designated simply מְלָאכִי.

But by gradations, the Jews, like the Greeks and Romans, personified the various forces of evil of whose existence they had any sensible experience, and thus, in process of time, they peopled the imaginary realms of Hades with a host of malignant demons. Hence arose the מְלָאכִי הַבְּלָה or מְלָאכִי הַמָּוֶת, who are so numerous that every man has a thousand on his left hand and a myriad on his right (T. B. *Berach*, 6a). The phrase מְלָאכִי רָעִים is already to be met with in Ps. lxxviii. 49; and in the Book of Jubilees or the smaller Genesis (Ed. Dillmann in Ewald's *Jahrbücher der Biblischen Wissenschaft*, II. and III., Ch. x.) Noah prays to be preserved from the destroying spirits.

In Job xxxiii. 22, the מְמַהֲרִים are, according to Ibn Ezra, the Angels of Death who annihilate the life of man; but this is doubtful. The Mid. מעשה רורה goes so far as to enumerate six Angels of death (vide *Kolbo* §118 and *Beth Ha-Mid.* Jellinek, i. 157) and we have already seen that the plural מְלָאכִי מוֹת occurs in Prov. xvi. 14.

The popular imagination having thus established an extensive empire of evil spirits, it followed as a matter of

course that the Angel of Death, who impersonated the *summum malum*, was exalted to the position of sovereign and endowed with supreme power.

Hence he became synonymous with Sammaël, who is entitled :—

I. The greatest prince in Heaven (*Pirge R. Eliezer*, ch. xiii.).

II. Chief of all the Satans (*Deb. Rab.* xi. 4 מדרש פמירא *Beth Ha-mid.* Jellinek, i. 125 ; cf. Matt. ix. 34 and parallel passages) corresponding to the “*Daeva* of *Daevas*” in Parsic literature.

The name Sammaël, which is of frequent occurrence in Rabbinical writings and is also to be found several times in the *Ascensio Isaïæ* (Ed. Dillmann), is generally supposed to be compounded of סם “poison” and אל “God,” i.e. supreme poison. This etymology is based on the belief that Sammaël, the Angel of Death, puts an end to man’s existence by the infusion of a drop of gall or wormwood, “the poison whereof his spirit drinketh up” (T. B. *Aboda Sara*, 20b). Observe the recurring expression τὸ πικρὸν ποτήριον τοῦ θανάτου in the Testament of Abraham (Ed. James, note on p. 55 ff.).

The belief in the death-producing effect of a certain poisonous water seems to be very ancient, and no doubt the mythical drop employed by the Angel of Death to put an end to human life is connected therewith.

Josephus tells us (*Wars of the Jews*, IV. viii. 3), “There is a fountain by Jericho that runs plentifully, and is very fit for watering the ground ; it arises near the old city, which Joshua, the son of Nun, the general of the Hebrews, took the first of all the cities of the land of Canaan, by right of war. The report is that this fountain, at the beginning, caused not only the blasting of the earth and the trees, but of the children born of women ; and that it was entirely of a sickly and corruptive nature to all things whatsoever, but that it was made gentle and very whole-

some and fruitful by the prophet Elisha" (cf. 2 Kings ii. 21, 22).

There is also a remarkable passage in the Revelation of St. John (viii. 10, 11): "And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood, and the third part of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter." This is probably the echo of an old tradition. Already in Exodus (xv. 33) we find the Children of Israel lighting upon a place, of the waters of which they were unable to drink, "for they were bitter;" and in 2 Kings ii. 21 we are told that the prophet Elisha went forth to a spring of waters, and healed them, so that there should "not be from thence any more death or miscarrying."

It will also be remembered that the woman who "commits a trespass against her husband" is met by the priest with "the water of bitterness that causeth the curse;" and when pronounced guilty, she has to drink the water, which "shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell and her thigh shall fall away" (Num. v. 18, 27).

Moses, in his farewell address to the Children of Israel (Deut. xxix. 17), warns them lest there should be among them "a root of bitterness whereof the taste is noisome to humanity at large."

And the prophet Amos, when foretelling the destruction of the proud ones of Jacob, reproaches them with having turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood, *i.e.*, brought moral death upon themselves (Amos vi. 12). We must likewise not forget the exclamation of Agag: אֶכֶן קָרַב מֵרֵחַ הַמָּוֶת (1 Sam. xv. 32).

From this belief that the vital spark in man is extinguished by a drop of poison, arises the expression, "tasting death," which is common to Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic literature.

Matt. xvi. 28: "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death."

2 Esdr. vi. 26: "Men, who have not tasted death from their birth."

*Beresh. Rab.* ix. 6: "For the righteous ought not to have tasted death (לִטְעוֹם טַעַם מִיָּתוֹה); nevertheless, they have accepted the taste of death, in order to punish the wicked."

Apocalypse d'Adam (Renan, in *Nouveau Journal Asiatique*, 1853, ii., p. 446, l. 4). "Motha ta'êm 'na."

Koran, Sur. iii. 182: "Every soul shall taste of death."

But, to return to the word Sammaël, as one of the appellations of the Angel of Death.

In some MSS., especially those of Yemen, the name is spelt שַׁמְאֵל. Hence it is sometimes explained as derived from "semol," "left," representing the evil inclination that turns men away from the right path, and is therefore identical with Satan (from *satah*, to turn away). (*Guide to the Perplexed*, Maimonides, Trans. Friedländer, Part II., ch. xxx., note.)

"According to some commentators, it is connected with 'sama,' 'blind'; Sammaël is the element in man that makes him blind, and prevents him from seeing the truth. That element is the 'imaginative faculty,' that originates in impressions received from material objects." (*Ibid.*)

Thus death, is first personified as an angel who is the agent of human destruction, and this angel subsequently assumes the part of the Satan who is ever watching to allure man to self-destruction. Hereafter, the Satan becomes synonymous with the active principle of evil in man, which makes for unrighteousness, being constantly represented as the "Origin of Evil in a personal form."

The rise and development of this conception of death is aptly summarised by R. Simon ben Lakisch הוּא שְׂטָן הוּא הוּא מְלַאךְ הַמּוֹת וְיֵצֶר הָרַע הוּא הוּא מְלַאךְ הַמּוֹת and confirmed by a Boraitha יוֹרֵד וּמֵתָעָה וְעוֹלָה וּמֵרִיז נוֹטֵל רֶשֶׁת וְנוֹטֵל נֶשְׁמָה (T. B. *Baba Bathra*, 16a).

In this connection it is worthy of note that Sammaël (the Angel of Death) is likewise identified with the serpent that brought about the Fall (Gen. iii. 1), called נחש הקדמוני (vide Rev. xx. 2, "The old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan"; Wisdom ii. 23f.; also *Yalk. Chad.*, § 78, סמאל הוא נחש הוא שמן). Chwolsohn compares Sammaël with Smâl, the greatest god of the heathens of Haran, who is enthroned in the northern climate שִׁמְאֵל, שִׁמְאֵל (Ssabier II., 59ff., etc.).

We must not labour under the impression, however, that Satan, the Angel of Death, was fashioned by Him whom the prophet represents to be בִּרְאָה־רָע (Isaiah xlv. 7) as the *fons et origo* of evil. He was originally one of the greatest princes of heaven, until his own vicious deeds brought about his dethronement and degradation. (*Pirque R. Eliezer*, ch. xiii.)

Satan—so call him now ; his former name  
Is heard no more in heaven.

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V., 658.

We shall now proceed to consider the threefold aspect under which death is presented in Jewish writings. We shall then see that שָׁטָן, סִמְאֵל, מְלַאךְ הַמָּוֶת and יֵצֶר הָרָע are interchangeable terms in post-Biblical literature.

Sammaël-Satan is both seducer and destroyer. He it is who is to be held responsible for having brought death into the world ; and ever since that time he has been the arch-adversary of man, tempting him to sin, and subsequently denouncing him before God. He sprang to earth on the back of the serpent, appearing in the form of a camel, and coming to Eve he enticed her to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life, and Eve having touched the tree, beheld the Angel of Death standing opposite to her (*Beresh. Rab.* xix. 1, *Pirque R. Eliezer*, ch. xiii.). Thus the *Targ. Ps. Jonath.* translates Gen. iii. 6 : " And the woman saw Sammaël, the Angel of Death, and she was afraid." (Cf. also Koran, Sur. ii., *Book of Adam and Eve*, Ed. Malan, vi. ; and Milton,

*Paradise Lost*, IV. 194: "Up he flew, and on the Tree of Life sat like a cormorant.")

The tradition has a slightly different complexion in a work ascribed to St. Ephraim and known as *Die Schatzhöhle* (Ed. Bezold, i. 6), which says that Satan entered into the serpent and dwelt within it, because he felt that Eve would flee at sight of "his execrable shape." But as she turned towards him, she beheld her likeness reflected in his person.

Satan revealed to Adam and Eve their nakedness (Koran, Sur. vii.). He induced Cain to kill his brother Abel, the first priest (*Die Schatzhöhle*, Ed. Bezold, i. 8). When God commanded Abraham to offer up his only son as a sacrifice (Gen. xxii. 2), Sammaël appeared to the Patriarch and taunted him with having taken leave of his senses (*Beresh. Rab.* vi. 1). He also warned Isaac that the latter was about to be killed (*Ibid.* lvi. 3). He disclosed to Sarah the deception that was being practised upon her, thereby causing her death (*Pirque R. Eliezer*, ch. xxxii.; cf. also Rashi on Gen. xxiii. 3). The Midrash likewise tells us (*Beresh. Rab.*, lviii. 6) that the act of Abraham's rising from before his dead, referred to in Gen. xxiii. 3, was due to the fact that the Patriarch discerned the Angel of Death standing before him. He came to reproach Abraham with having brought about the death of Sarah through the binding of Isaac. (See commentaries on *Beresh. R.* and Beer's *Leben Abraham's*, p. 74.) His particular animosity towards Abraham was excited by the fact that he stood behind the door on the occasion when the Patriarch gave a banquet to the great ones of the earth, and no notice was taken of him by Abraham's domestics (*Zohar*, Ed. Krotoschin, I. 106). Sammaël, the Guardian-Angel of Esau, was "the man" who wrestled with Jacob (*Zohar* cited in *Yalk. Reub.* on Gen. xxxii. 25). It was he who incited the children of Israel to idolatry at the time of the worship of the golden calf (*Pirque R. Eliezer*, ch. xlv.; cf. also Koran, Sur. xx. 87, 90, 96). When Korah and his party rebelled against

Moses, the Angel of Death wanted to draw his sword against Israel, but Moses (*i.e.*, the Tribe of Levi) averted the catastrophe (*Bemidb. Rab.*, v. 7). He prevented Moses from pronouncing a blessing upon the children of Israel all the days of the Prophet's life, until the man of God bound him (*Pesikta de Rab. Kahana*, Ed. Buber, Piska 32). And we are told in *Midrash Tanchuma* (Ed. Buber, Deut. 27*b*) that Moses, ultimately victorious, blessed Israel in presence of the Angel of Death. Satan persuaded God to deliver up Job into his hands, and the fact that he was invested with the power of taking away life is shown by the repeated injunction of God: "Only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (Job i. 12); "Behold, he is in thine hand; only spare his life" (*Ibid.* ii. 6). "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel" (1 Chron. xxi. 1). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (ii. 14). And the Jews to this day pray every morning for deliverance מַשְׁטֵן הַמְּשֻׁחָרֵית, as "Rabbi" used invariably to do at the conclusion of his devotions (T. B. *Berach*, 16*b*).

In the Book of Jubilees (chap. x.) Satan is called "Mas-têmah," "chief of the destroying host" (from מַשְׁטֵם = מַשְׁטָן, מ and נ interchanging in the Semitic languages. Compare the use of מַשְׁטָמָה in Hos. ix. 7, 8). In chap. xlviii. the angel relates how Mastêmah wanted to kill Moses on the latter's return to Egypt. He tried to deliver Moses into the hands of the Egyptians, and it was he who persuaded the people to pursue Moses and the Children of Israel when they went forth from Egypt. On the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth days, Mastêmah was bound so that he might perpetrate no mischief, but on the nineteenth he was set free to harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and to entice them to follow the Israelites.

Kohut, in his brilliant essay (p. 72 fol.), shows that Satan—Sammaël is also used promiscuously with אֶשְׁמַדַּי (Aeshmadai), the personification of moral and physical evil.

Thus, a story narrated of Satan in *Mid-Abchir* on Gen. ix. 20 and quoted in *Yalk. on Gen.*, § 61, is associated with Aeshmadai (שמדון) in *Beresh. Rab.* xxxvi. 3 (cf. note 3 by Loria.) Another example is to be found in the book of Tobit, where Asmodeus kills the seven husbands of Sara in turn.

And here I may remark that Kohut likewise proves conclusively that the demonology of the ancient Hebrews was mainly acquired under Persian influences. The Jews "mingled themselves with the nations," and as is evidenced by history, easily assimilated heathen ideas, "which became a snare unto them."

A special god, or Angel of Death, is not confined to the Jews. In Arabic literature, "Azraël is the Angel of Death, who dissevers men's souls from their bodies. Even the Chuwahes, a race of Turkish affinity, are stated to reverence a god of death, who takes to himself the souls of the departed, and whom they call Esrel. . . . This deity is no other than Azraël, the angel of death, adopted under Moslem influence" (Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, p. 301). In the Greek and Latin Classics, no mention is made of an Angel of Death; we are, however, familiar with the various deities who presided over the realms of the dead in the Greek and Roman mythologies. Death, it is true, is personified in Eurip. *Alkestis*, 843, and in Virg. *Aen.* XI. 197; but probably, in the former instance, the conception is not a popular one, but a creation of the poet's own, and in the latter, Mors, according to Conington, is practically equivalent to Orcus. Other passages are doubtful. In modern Greek literature, "Charos, or Charontas, whose name is, of course, identical with Charon, appears in the popular tradition as the angel of death and the agent of Divine omnipotence" (*The Customs and Lore of Modern Greece*, Rennell Rodd, Chap. IV.). Mohammedan tradition alone attempts to explain the Genesis of the Angel of Death. "God created the Angel of Death, and separated him from the rest of his creatures by a million partition-walls. God endowed him with strength greater than that of heaven



and earth, and he was therefore bound with seventy thousand chains, each of which corresponded to the space of a thousand years. The angels did not approach him, and were ignorant of the place of his residence. They caught, however, occasional echoes of his voice, but did not become personally acquainted with him until the birth of Adam. When God created the first man, he appointed the Angel of Death as his governor. The Angel of Death asked, 'O Lord, what is death?' Thereupon the partition-walls receded at the command of God, when Death became visible to the Angel of Death. Then God addressed the Angels: 'Take up your position and look upon this Death.' The Angels obeyed, and God said to Death, 'Fly away over their heads, and spread out all thy wings, and open all thy eyes.' Then Death flew away in sight of the Angels, and the latter fell down fainting, and remained in that condition for a thousand years. After the lapse of that period they recovered themselves, and said to God, 'O Lord, hast Thou possibly created a being that is mightier than this?' 'I have indeed created such a one,' replied God; 'I, however, am more powerful than he, nevertheless, every creature must inevitably taste him.' Then God addressed Azraël: 'Thou art he whom I have appointed as Ruler over Death.' Whereupon Azraël exclaimed, 'My God, by means of what power shall I lay hold of him, since he is stronger than I?' Then God conferred upon him the power of Heaven. The Angel of Death accordingly seized hold of Death, and the latter lay vanquished in his hand. Then spoke Death: 'O Lord, pray grant me permission to let my voice resound but once in Heaven.' God complied, when Death cried in loudest tones, 'I am Death, who divorces friend from friend, man from woman, husband from wife; who wrests daughters from the embrace of their mothers, sons from fathers, and brothers from sisters; who subdues the mighty among mankind, causing graves to become inhabited, and making desolate both houses and castles. I am Death, and "where-

soever ye be, death will overtake you, although ye be in lofty towers" (Koran, Sur. IV., 80), and there is no creature who shall not taste me'" (*Muhamm. Eschat.*, chap. iii.). It is not difficult to recognise that this legend, for which Mohammed is held responsible, is simply an amalgam of Rabbinic traditions, embellished by the fertile imagination of the Arabs.

The Angel of Death, according to Jewish tradition, is a formidable personage. In the first place, he is of gigantic proportions. Thus we are told that his stature reaches from one end of the world to the other (מסכת גן עדן וגיהנם, *Beth Ha-Mid.* Jellinek, v. p. 48). If the waters of all seas and rivers were to be poured on his head, not a drop would remain behind on earth (*Muhamm. Eschat.*, ch. iv.) His clothing is of fire, his covering is of fire; he is in fact all fire (מסכת חבוט הקבר, *Beth Ha-Mid.* Jellinek, i.). We may recall that the appearance of the living creatures described by Ezekiel (i. 13) was "like burning coals of fire." Compare Milton, *Paradise Lost*, II. 708, Satan "like a comet burn'd," and also the description of Charon in Virg. *Aen.* vi. 300, "His eyes are fixed orbs of fire." "From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, the Angel of Death is full of eyes" (T. B. *Aboda Sara*, 20b; מסכת חבוט הקבר, *Beth Ha-Mid.*, Jellinek, i. See also the *Kitáb es-Sulúk*, the Book of Travelling to God and to Perfection, quoted in *Muhamm. Eschat.*, ch. iv.). R. Aaron Berechya in his well known work מעבר יבק (Ed. Wilna, 88b) remarks: the Angel of Death appears to human sight as if he were full of eyes, and the reason of this is that man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for it is written (Gen. iii. 6), "it was a delight to the eyes," meaning "to see the Angel of Death, who is full of eyes." The creatures of Ezekiel's vision were likewise, "full of eyes round about" (Ezek. i. 18). The vision in Rev. iv. 6, also depicts "four living creatures full of eyes." This tradition may have been in the mind of Job, when picturing God as his destroyer, he exclaimed: "Mine adversary sharpeneth his eyes upon me" (Note וַיִּשְׁמַחֵנִי).

The *Kitab es-Sulūk* states that not only is the Angel of Death full of eyes, but also of tongues, and there is no existing creature among all the beings into whose nostrils God has breathed the spirit of life, of whose face, tongue, eye and hand, there is not an exact counterpart in the person of the Angel of Death. Thus, when anyone dies, his eye passes out of the Angel's body, its lustre being, as it were permanently dimmed. This book also records a tradition that the Angel of Death has a seat in the seventh or (according to some) in the fourth heaven, which God fashioned out of light. In this connection, we may notice that we read in 2 Cor. xi. 14, "Even Satan fashioneth himself into an Angel of Light." He also sometimes takes the form of an Angel of Light in the Testament of Abraham (Ed. James) and in the book of Adam and Eve (Ed. Malan, ch. xxvii.).

According to the Targum on Job (xviii. 7), Sammaël (the Angel of Death) flies like a bird. He has twelve wings (*Pirque R. Eliezer*, ch. xiii.), being twice the number of those of the Seraphim (cf. Isa. vi. 2).

Nevertheless, his passage to earth is not so rapid as that of some of the other ministering angels. For we are told in the Talmud (Bab. *Berach*, 4*b*), Michael flies to earth at a bound; Gabriel takes two flights, Elijah four, and the Angel of Death eight, but in time of pestilence the latter also reaches earth in a single flight.

The dreaded visitant carries a sword as an emblem of his gruesome vocation. Thus, in the hour when a man has to quit this world, he stands at the head of the sick with sword unsheathed, to which a bitter drop clings. When the patient discerns his presence he is seized with a fit of trembling, in the midst of which he opens his mouth, when the Angel takes the opportunity of pouring the bitter drop down his throat, and the man immediately dies, turns putrid, and his face becomes livid (T.B. *Ab. Sar.* 20*b*, מסכת חבוט הקבר; *Beth Ha-Mid.* Jellinek, i.). When Eliphaz the Temanite speaks of the wicked being "waited for of the

sword" (Job xv. 32), he may be thinking of this notorious weapon; the parallelism would thus be complete. In the Book of Chronicles the sword of the Angel of Death is occasionally referred to. Thus the angel that is sent to destroy Jerusalem stands between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand (1 Chron. xxi. 16). David is afraid to inquire of God in the high place at Gibeon, "because of the sword of the Angel of the Lord" (*ibid.* xxi. 30). And, at the command of the Lord, the Angel puts up his sword again into the sheath thereof, as a sign that he would not carry out the evil purpose with which he set out (*ibid.* xxi. 27).

Likewise, in the *Alkestis* of Euripides (843) Death is armed with a sword (*cf.* Macrobius, *Saturn*, v. 19, "In hac fabula in scenam Orcus (*i.e.*, *θανάτος*) inducitur gladium gestans").

When dogs began to howl it used to be regarded as a sign that the Angel of Death was coming into a city (T. B. *Baba Kamma*, 60*b*). Hence one is warned not to walk in the middle of the street when plague is raging in a city, as the Angel of Death struts along there, and, being then invested with absolute power, he is free to slay indiscriminately.

The Arabs seem to have shared this belief. "When the animal howls without apparent cause in the neighbourhood of a house, it forebodes death to one of the inmates; for the dog, they say, can distinguish the awful form of Azraël, the Angel of Death, hovering over the doomed abode; whereas man's spiritual sight is dull and dim by reason of sins" (*Pilgrimage to El Medinah and Meccah*, Richard F. Burton, 1885, II., p. 54). The tradition that the howling of the dog presages death is also held by most of the Southern Slavs (Friedrich S. Krauss, in *Zeitschr. d. Vereins f. Volkskunde*, II., p. 177). In time of pestilence it is likewise dangerous to go alone to the house of Assembly, because the Angel of Death is in the habit of depositing his weapons therein. This is only the case, however, if

children do not read Scripture there, and if ten persons (the requisite quorum to form a congregation) do not pray there. It is also imprudent to walk on the side-paths when peace reigns in a city, because the Angel of Death, being then divested of power, secretes himself there (*Baba Kamma*, 60*b*). The poet Longfellow, in the *Golden Legend* (viii., "The Village School"), summarises the characteristics and methods of the Angel of Death in a conversation between Rabbi ben Israel and Judas :—

- Rabbi* :               Why howl the dogs at night ?  
*Judas* : In the Rabbinical book it saith,  
           The dogs howl when, with icy breath,  
           Great Sammaël, the Angel of Death,  
                           Takes through the town his flight !  
*Rabbi* : Well, boy ! now say, if thou art wise,  
           When the Angel of Death, who is full of eyes,  
           Comes where a sick man dying lies,  
                           What doth he do to the wight ?  
*Judas* : He stands beside him, dark and tall,  
           Holding a sword from which doth fall  
           Into his mouth a drop of gall ;  
                           And so he turneth white !

Yet, notwithstanding the alarming exterior of the Angel of Death, it would appear that he had cordial relations with certain persons. Thus the Talmud mentions that he was in the habit of appearing to R. Chanina bar Papa, whose friend he was (T. B. *Kethub.*, 77 *b*). He was also on intimate terms with Rab Baybi bar Abaye (T. B. *Chagga*, 4 *b*). He seems likewise to have been a friend of Raba's, as the following shows: "When Raba was dying he said to his brother, Rab Seoram, who stood by: 'Tell the Angel of Death not to torture me.' 'Art thou not his confidant?' replied Rab Seoram. 'Yes,' said Raba, 'but once bad luck has set in, I am powerless'" (T. B. *Moed Kat.*, 28 *a*).

The power of the Angel of Death extends to all countries and all sorts and conditions of men. Thus the author of the Song of Songs can think of no higher type of strength with which to compare the force of true

love than death (viii. 6), just as the Psalmist declares that the lovingkindness of God is superior to life (Ps. lxxiii. 4).

The Midrash Rabba on Koheleth viii. 8 says: Man has no power over the spirit (*i.e.*, of the Angel of Death) so as to elude his grasp.

None can plead with the Angel of Death: Wait for me until I have arranged my affairs, and I will then accompany thee; neither can one say to him: I offer my son or my servant, or my family in my stead (*Ibid.*).

In illustration of the methods of the Angel of Death, a remarkable legend is related in T. B. *Chagiga* 4 *b*, which is thought by some to involve a confused reference to the Mother of Jesus (see *Chagiga*, Streane, p. 18, note 2):—

“Rab Baybi bar Abaye heard the Angel of Death saying to his servant: Go and bring me Miriam, the women’s hairdresser. The servant went and brought Miriam, the teacher of young children. I wanted, said the Angel of Death, Miriam, the women’s hairdresser. Then I will take this one back, replied the messenger. Since she has once been brought, rejoined the Angel, let her be included in the number of my victims. . . . Thereupon Rab Baybi bar Abaye asked the Angel of Death: Hast thou authority to act thus? The Angel answered: Is it not written: There is that is destroyed by reason of injustice? (Prov. xiii. 23.) But, pleaded the Rabbi, it also says (Eccl. i. 4): One generation goeth, and another generation cometh. The Angel replied: I shepherd them till the measure of life allotted to their generation has been fulfilled, and subsequently I hand them over to Dumah. In that case, asked the Rabbi, what becomes of the years of which thou hast deprived them? If, answered the Angel, there happens to be a distinguished student, who is magnanimous enough not to insist upon his dignity, I add to his life the years which I have taken away from another, and thus the equilibrium is adjusted.”

(The curious expression: “I shepherd them,” may be

illustrated by a passage in *Mid. Tehillim* (Ed. Buber, 51b): "There is a place called *חצר מות*, which derives its name from the fact that it is assigned to the departed spirits of men. It represents a building with a court-yard, encircled by a fence. Before the court-yard flows a river, adjoining which is a field. Every day Dumah leads out the spirits to pasture in the field and to drink of the river.")

Yet the power of the Angel of Death is necessarily bounded by those limitations which mark every finite being. Thus he could not prevail over the Israelites at the Giving of the Law, as six hundred thousand angels had descended and crowned each of the sons of Israel with the crown of *Shem-ha-mephorash* (*Pirge R. Eliezer*, ch. 47, quoted by Dr. Taylor in *Pirge Aboth*; cf. also *Shemoth Rabba*, li. 2).

It appears that the Angel of Death is likewise unable to enforce his will when confronted by one who is uninterruptedly occupied with the study of Torah.

And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.

Cowper, *Exhortation to Prayer*.

Thus he could not approach Rabba bar Nachmani (T. B. *Baba Mezia*, 86 b). He was in the same difficulty in the case of Rab Chisda, whose lips never ceased repeating words of Torah. Hence he had recourse to the expedient of letting himself down under a cedar-tree in Rab's House of Instruction. He cleft the cedar; the sound of the crash silenced Rab Chisda for a moment, when the Angel overpowered him (T. B. *Moed Kat.* 28 a; in *Maccoth* 10 a it is the messenger of the Angel who acts thus). The Angel of Death was likewise unable to overcome Rabbi Chija. So he disguised himself in the garb of a poor man, and knocked at the door for a piece of bread. Rabbi Chija ordered it to be given him. "Ah!" said the Angel of Death, "thou hast pity on the poor; hast thou none for me?" He then revealed himself to Rabbi Chija, displaying a fiery rod, and took away the Rabbi's soul

(T. B. *Moed Kat.* 28 a). We are also told that on the day when David was to depart from this world, the Angel of Death took up his position before the king, but was unable to exercise any charm over him, as David was prosecuting his study of Torah with uninterrupted vigour. At length the Angel said to himself, "How can I accomplish my purpose?" Discerning that David had an orchard at the back of the Royal Palace, he made his way into it and shook the trees violently. David went out to see what had happened; he mounted a staircase which gave way under his tread, and thus he expired (T. B. *Shabb.* 30 b).

There were other circumstances, too, which interfered with the fulfilment of the Angel's mission. Thus Rabbi Eliezer was eating heave-offering (הֶבֶלֶת; cf. Exod. xxv. 1) when the Angel of Death appeared to him. He addressed the Angel:—"Have I not eaten heave-offering, and is it not called holy?" (cf. Numb. xviii. 8). Then his hour passed, *i.e.*, the Angel of Death went from him, leaving him unscathed (T. B. *Moed Kat.* 28 a).

Another effectual means of evading—at least temporarily—the stroke of the Angel of death is the practice of benevolence, גְּמִילוּת חֲסִדִּים (cf. *Derech Erez Sutta*, Ed. Tawrogi IX. 4) "Give alms," says the Targum on Prov. xxi. 14, "so that the wrath of the Angel of Death may be averted from thee" (cf. Prov. x. 2, וַיִּצְדָּקוּהָ תַּעֲזִיל חַמְסָתָהּ).

The Talmud mentions certain places which were not within the jurisdiction of the Angel of Death. There is a tradition that Luz was not subject to the control of death, but when the old inhabitants grew weary of life, they used to go outside the city walls and die there (T. B. *Sota*, 46 b).

It is strange to find a duplicate of this legend among the myths of the Middle Ages. "Also in Ireland is a little island in which men die not, but when they be overcome with age they be borne out of that island to die without" (*Medieval Lore*, Ed. Robert Steel, p. 80).

A similar narrative is related by Raba, in the name of Rabbi Taboth—or, as some call him, Rab Tabyomi (T. B.



*Sanhed.* 97 a). "Once it happened that I came into a town which was called 'Truth,' the inhabitants of which never utter a falsehood, and none of them dies before his appointed time. I took unto myself a wife from among them, and had by her two children. One day my wife sat combing her hair, when her neighbour knocked at the door to inquire after her well-being, and I, thinking it were unseemly to admit any one under the circumstances, informed the fair visitor that my wife was not at home. Shortly afterwards the two children died. Then the people of the town came to me and asked, 'How has this happened?' I explained to them the cause, and they said to me, 'Remove, we pray thee, from our midst, that thou mayest not excite death against us.'"

Apropos of the foregoing, a strange story is told in T. B. *Succa* (53 a), which also appears in Arabic literature, where it is related in illustration of a verse of the Koran (*Sur.* iii. 148), "If ye had been in your houses, verily they would have gone forth to fight, whose slaughter was decreed, to the places where they died." (See *Muhamm. Eschat.*, ch. iv., and Al-Beidâwi, quoted by Sale in his edition of the Koran, vol. ii., p. 270), "There were two Ethiopians at the court of Solomon, as it says (1 Kings iv. 3) "Elihoriph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, were secretaries." One day Solomon perceived the Angel of Death looking depressed. He asked, 'Why art thou so gloomy?' The Angel replied, 'Because these two secretaries should fall to the destroying angels.' Thereupon the King said to his secretaries, 'Go ye into the district of Luz (which was not in the province of the Angel of Death).' They followed their Royal Master's advice; but as they drew near to the city of Luz, they fell ill and died. Solomon subsequently observed the Angel of Death chuckling. 'Why art thou in such a state of glee?' asked the King. 'I rejoice,' replied the Angel, 'because it was to no good purpose that thou didst send out of my reach those of whom I came in search.'"

It seems, too, that, notwithstanding the distinct exclamation of the Psalmist, "What man is he that shall live and not see death; that shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?" (Ps. lxxxix. 48), there were certain persons who, by the grace of God, did "not see corruption, and still live away."

The Bible records but two such instances. (1) Enoch "was not; for God took him" (Gen. v. 24; cf. *Test. of Isaac*, James, p. 143, where "our father Enoch" is described as "the only perfect man who ascended to heaven"). (2) Elijah went up in a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings ii. 11).

The veracity of the tradition with regard to the former was, strange to say, contested by some of the Teachers of the third century (cf. *Beresh. Rab.* xxv. 1). But the creative imagination of other Rabbis was not satisfied even with two authenticated cases of translation to Paradise, marked by the suspension of a universal law.

Thus we find it stated in *Derech Erez Sutta* (ch. I.) that nine entered the Garden of Eden without dying, viz. :—

1. Enoch, son of Jared (Gen. v. 24, and Rashi *in loco*).
2. Elijah (2 Kings ii. 11).
3. Messiah (T. B. *Sanhed.* 98*b*).
4. Eliezer, the servant of Abraham (T. B. *Bab. Bath.* 58*a*, and Rashi's *Comm. in loco*; also T. B. *Kalla*, Ed. Coronel, p. 10, and *Kerem-Chemed*, vii. 215).
5. Hiram, King of Tyre (probably the artist of same name, mentioned in 1 Kings vii. 45; cf. T. B. *Kalla*, pp. 10 and 19*b*, since, according to T. B. *Bab. Bath.* 75*a*, *Beresh. Rab.* § 96, and *Yalkut Ez.* § 367, Hiram, King of Tyre, was cast out by God).
6. Ebed-Melech, the Cushite (probably because he drew Jeremiah out of the pit; cf. Jer. xxxviii. 6-13. According to *Pirque R. Eliezer*, ch. liii., he is to be identified with Baruch, son of Nereia; cf. Jer. xxxvi. 4).
7. Jabez, son of Rabbi Jehuda ha-Nâsi (neither Jost nor Graetz knows of a son of "Rabbi" named Jabez. On the other hand, he is enumerated in *Ha-Chaluz*, ii., p. 89,

and in the biographical sketches of R. Jehuda ha-Nâsi in *Mishnayoth* i., Ed. Vienna, 1815, and is identified with a prematurely deceased son of "Rabbi" in T. B. *Kethuboth* 62. According to *Kerem-Chemed*, vii. 215 *sqq.* it is Jabez of 1 Chr. iv. 10 who is here referred to. In T. B. *Temurah* 16a, the verse 1 Chr. iv. 10, which embodies a request of Jabez that was subsequently fulfilled by God, is associated with R. Jehuda).

8. Serach, daughter of Asher (because she is supposed to have first communicated to Jacob that Joseph was yet alive. See *Sefer ha-Jâshar* on Gen. xlv.).

9. Bithya, daughter of Pharaoh (the education of Moses and Aaron was ascribed to her, hence she received this reward).

Other sages add also Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (cf. T. B. *Kethub.* 77a).

[The foregoing notes are adapted from *Derech Erez Sutta*, ed. Tawrogi].

On the other hand, a Midrash cited in *Yalkut Ezek.* § 367, enumerates (without comment) thirteen who have not tasted death:—Enoch; Eleazer, the servant of Abraham; Methuselah; Hiram, King of Tyre; Ebed-Melech, the Cushite; Bithya, daughter of Pharaoh; Serach, daughter of Asher; the three sons of Korah; Elijah; Messiah; and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi.

But a more explicit register of "immortals" is to be found in *Alphabetum Siracidis* (M. Steinschneider), 27ab, 28b, 29b. From this it appears that the following were vouchsafed admittance to Paradise without crossing the bridge of death:—

1. Enoch. Because he was righteous in his generation, so that there was none like unto him.

2. Eleazer, the servant of Abraham. He was the son of Ham, son of Noah, and when he heard the curse pronounced upon his father, he surrendered himself to Abraham, and became a righteous man.

3. Serach, the daughter of Asher. Because she communicated to Jacob that Joseph was yet alive, and the Patriarch said to her, "The mouth that has conveyed such good tidings shall not taste death."

4. Bithya, daughter of Pharaoh. She brought up Moses from his youth, and in order that people should not have to ask what reward did she receive, she had this privilege conferred upon her.

5. Ebed-Melech, the Cushite. Because he rescued Jeremiah from the miry pit.

6. The servant of Rabbi Jehuda ha-Nâsi. Because he was righteous, gentle, and lowly of spirit.

7. Jabez. Because he was more righteous than all his generation.

8. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. Because he was a man, "integer vitæ scelerisque purus," and a friend of the Angel of Death.

9. Hiram, King of Tyre. In view of the fact that he built the Temple, and was in the early part of his life a God-fearing man, he was granted a home in Paradise for a thousand years; but afterwards, having aggrandised himself, saying, "I am a god," etc., he was driven out of the garden of Eden, and made to enter Gehenna. (Hiram is here identified with the "Prince of Tyre," to whom Ezekiel is charged with a message (*Vide* Ezek. xxviii. 1 ff.; cf. *Beresh. Rab.* lxxxvi. 5).)

10. The generation of Yonadab ben Rechab. Because he wrote all the words in the Book of Jeremiah, and was righteous, and reprov'd Israel. (The text here is extremely puzzling. Possibly Jerem. xxxv. 19 is referred to.)

11. The generation of the bird Milcham. When Eve had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and had given also to her husband, and he had eaten thereof with her, she envied the rest of the creatures, and induced them all to follow her example (so that they too should die). Then she came to the bird

Milcham, and said to him, Eat of that of which thy companions have partaken; but he answered, Is it not sufficient that you have sinned against God, and brought death upon others, but you would entice me also to transgress a Divine command, so that I should eat and die; I will not listen to you. Thus he reproved Eve and all the creatures. Then a bath-qol immediately went forth, and said to Adam and Eve: Ye received a command, and obeyed it not, but ye sinned, and now ye come to the bird Milcham, to persuade him, too, to sin, and he will not hearken to you, because he stands in awe of me; therefore, because I laid no charge upon him, yet he regarded my decree, he shall never taste death, neither he nor his offspring.

Thus, when God had formed the Angel of Death, and the latter, beholding all the creatures, asked God to grant him permission to slay them, God replied: Thou hast jurisdiction over all creatures and their offspring, with the exception of the generation of the bird Milcham, who must never taste death. Then the Angel of Death said: Lord of the Universe, let them be set apart from me (for they are righteous), so that they may not learn the customs of the world, and trespass against thee and taste of sin. Forthwith, by God's authority, he built for them a great city, and caused them to enter it, and he set a seal upon its gates, saying, It has been decreed that my sword shall not rule over you, neither the sword of another, and ye shall not taste death until the end of all creation.

In connection with this legend, Dr. Jellinek remarks, in the introduction to *Beth-Ha-Midrash* VI. (p. xi., note 4)—Concerning the immortal bird מלחם (Milcham), in *Ben Sira* (Ed. Steinschneider), 27ab, 28b, 29ab, we read in the Rappoport MS. of the Midrash Alscha חיי שרה (where מלחם stands in place of מלחם)—the following:—The bird Miltam—why? Because when Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, and the bird Miltam, after having been offered some by all the creatures, refused to partake

thereof, God said : "I will raise him up for ever and ever as an example to mankind ; he and his posterity shall in future bear testimony to the merit of Israel. Thus he is now in that city which was built for him by the Angel of Death, and is fruitful and multiplies like all creatures. When he attains to the age of a thousand years, he begins to gradually diminish in size until he becomes like a little bird, and then his strength 'is renewed like the eagle,' so that he never wholly dies." The expression *דורו של מלחם* in *Ben Sira* here finds its justification, and does not need to be emended into *זרעו של מלחם*. [With reference to the foregoing, Herr Epstein, in his book *מקדמוניות היהודים* maintains (p. iii. n. 4) that in the MS. to which Dr. Jellinek alludes, the name of the bird is written *מלחם* not *מלחם*, and he likewise shows by quotations from various MSS. of "*Derech Erez Sutta*," that Jabez is described not as the *son*, but as the *grandson* of Rabbi Jehuda ha-Nâsi, while no mention whatever is made of a servant of Rabbi.]

According to *Beresh. Rab.* (xix. 5), the use of the word *וְגַם* in Genesis iii. 6 implies that Eve gave of the fruit also to the wild and domestic animals, and to the birds, and all partook thereof, with the solitary exception of a bird named *חֹל* — phoenix. The School of Rabbi Jannai taught: This bird survives to a thousand years ; and after the lapse of this period a fire breaks forth from its nest and burns it up, leaving only a residue equal to the size of an egg, which again assumes fresh limbs and acquires renewed vigour. Rabbi Judah states (in the name of Rabbi Simeon) that the bird lives about a thousand years, on the expiration of which its body contracts, its wings fall out, and there remains of it about as much as an egg, which becomes resuscitated. (See also *Mid-Shemuel*, ch. xxii., and compare Rashi's note on Job xxix. 18.)

Yet another tradition remains to be recorded with reference to this wonderful bird. Shem, the son of Noah, relates

(T. B. *Sanhed.* 108b) that while his father was engaged in feeding the inmates of the ark, he came across אורשנא (*Aruch* אורשינא) lying quite still in the background. He asked the bird: How comes it that thou alone dost not stand in need of nourishment? I observed, replied the bird, that thou hadst so many to attend to, that I did not care to trouble thee. Thereupon Noah exclaimed: May it be the will of God that thou mayst never die! Delitzsch in his commentary on Job (xxix. 18) has incontestably proved the identity of this bird with חוֹלִי, the fabled phoenix (*vide* Levy, *Neuheb. u. Chald. W. B.* i. 48a).

As is well known, the word חוֹלִי, in Job xxix. 18, is by many regarded as an allusion to the Phoenix:—"Then I said, I shall die beside my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the Phoenix." (*Vide Merx, Archiv.* II. 104ff.)

Thus in the LXX. rendering of this passage, some see in στέλεχος φοίνικος a corruption of φοῖνιξ (cf. *Vulg.*). The Massorah, *in loco*, draws attention to the peculiar signification of חוֹלִי, and in the *Book of Roots*, s. v. חוֹלִי, Kimchi emphasizes that the Jewish teachers of Nehardea read חוֹלִי in order to differentiate the word from חוֹל "sand."

For a list of authorities to be consulted with regard to the Greek conception of the Phoenix and the more ancient Egyptian form of the myth and its genesis, see Dillmann's last edition of Job in the admirable series of the K. E. H. B. A popular but learned article in a recent number of the *Saturday Review* (No. 1,967), Vol. LXXVI, pp. 38-40, will likewise be found interesting.

But, to come back to the Angel of Death, with whom we set out.

It seems that notwithstanding his unique capacity for inflicting wounds, and thus entailing untold suffering upon the human race, his continued existence is essential to the equilibrium of the Universe. For according to a parable in T. B. *Yoma* (96b) if the Angel of Death in the form of the יָצֵר הָרָע were to be slain, the world would perish.

Yet he is not immortal. In the Millennium, neither

Satan nor any evil destroyer will exist (Book of Jubilees xxiii.). The *אֵלֵי הַמָּוֶת* will ultimately succumb (T. B. *Succa* 52a; compare a parallel passage in the *Bundelesh*, ch. xxxi.). The day will assuredly come when the Lord, with his sore and great and strong sword, will punish leviathan, the fleeting serpent and leviathan the winding serpent (Is. xxvii. 1) identified by later Rabbinic writers with Satan (cf. Rev. xx. 2).

And the arch-enemy of the human race is painfully conscious of the fate in store for him. When Satan was vouchsafed a glimpse of the Messiah, he was filled with terror, well knowing that he had beheld him who would sooner or later plunge the Angel of Death into destruction (*Pesikta Rabbati*, ed. Friedmann, *Piska* 36; *Yalk.* on Is. § 359).

For has not the Prophet Isaiah predicted (xxv. 8) that the Lord of Hosts himself will eventually swallow up death for ever (a metaphor, by the way, kindred with that of tasting death)? And has not St. Paul in that stately chapter of Corinthians which forms part of the Christian burial service, foretold the same blissful consummation? (1 Cor. xv. 54. Cf. Rev. xx. 2, and also the poem *אֵלֵי הַמָּוֶת* in the service for the Passover "night of observance.")

A. P. BENDER.

(To be continued.)

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